

## OSAC Team Letter

### **Mission of OSAC:**

***"The mission of the Council is to provide tools to ensure that the Pacific West Area (PWA) has highly skilled office support staff to meet the research goals of the agency."***

### **Goals of the OSAC:**

***"Our goal is to help strengthen our office professionals through teamwork, networking, and mentoring."***

### **A message from your Senior Co-Chair:**

Half the year is gone already...keep up the great work with your dedication and outstanding customer service!

*Cheryl Borg*

### **The Council has two primary objectives:**

The 1<sup>st</sup> objective is: *"Improving Communication, awareness and skills among office support staff, and strengthen programs and opportunities for their career development and enhancement."* Our 2<sup>nd</sup> objective is *"Provide advice and recommendations on agency and PWA policies and programs related to the employment, development, and advancement of office support staff."*



We always look for better ways to make our jobs easier. If you have a thought/idea, please email one of your council members.

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*More information can also be found at:*

[http://www.ars.usda.gov/main/site\\_main.htm?modecode=53-00-00-00#](http://www.ars.usda.gov/main/site_main.htm?modecode=53-00-00-00#)  
(under the More arrow)

Fill-able Forms



### Fillable Forms in AFM

More fillable forms are now available through the AFM Portal. The forms can be signed electronically by the originator, saved, printed in pdf format and submitted with each Portal request ticket for each of service center locations listed below:

<https://adminservices.ars.usda.gov/sc/East>

<https://adminservices.ars.usda.gov/sc/NCR>

<https://adminservices.ars.usda.gov/sc/West>

### Mid-Year Reviews



"Thank you" to all for ensuring the timely completion and submission of the Mid-Year reviews. It is never too early to start preparing for the FY14 Performance Appraisals.

### RPES Review – GS-15's

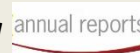
Beginning in FY15, the following review schedule will be implemented for all GS-15 RPES reviews:

1. Research positions at the GS-15 level will be reviewed by panels on a 7-year cycle, to ensure accuracy of classification.
2. Scientists or their supervisor may request an early review by an RPES panel before the review is due when there has been a significant change which may affect the grade level of the position. Requests for early review that occur after 5 years from their last evaluation will automatically be referred through the supervisory channels to the Area Director for notification to the RPE Staff of intent to be reviewed and place on the next available panel in their peer group. Early reviews that are requested before 5 years will be handled as they are currently.
3. GS-15s will continue to adhere to current policy on development of their case write-up.

4. GS-15s will be phased into panel forums that convene under alternative environments, such as teleconferences and /or video conferences. This will be an ongoing and flexible process to determine the most efficient way to evaluate the GS-15 cases with the same equal and fair consideration given to all other graded scientist. Guidance can be found at:

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/rpes/index.htm>

### Annual Report Season is Open!



Annual reports are required and reported for all "D" projects and due to the Office of National Programs NLT October 1, 2014. New this year, subordinate projects do not require an Annual Report. Guidance was provided from Trish Roman by email dated May 12, 2014. Please refer to this email and Chapter 15 of the ARIS manual for processing of reports.

Due dates are as follows:

**August 1, 2014** – Corvallis, Davis, Dubois, Maricopa, Pullman, Wapato, and Wenatchee

**August 8, 2014** – Albany (WRRRC and PGEC), Hilo, Salinas, and Tucson.

**August 15, 2014** - Aberdeen, Burns, Boise, Kimberly, Parlier, Pendleton, Prosser, Reno, and Riverside.

### New Updates in

**Chapter 4C – Incoming Funds** has been updated and is posted in the ARIS Online Manual.

**ARIS Recent Releases** can be found in ARIS under *ARIS Information > What's New!*

**The "Grant Awarded" Incoming Funds** field can now be directly modified in the Active File.

### Lean Sigma Six – Agreements Process

**Phase 2-3** is now live. This will streamline the approval process and initiate email notifications for Incoming/Outgoing Agreements.

### ***Next Generation AFM Customer Service Portal***



Over the last 8 months the Administrative & Financial Management office has been working on the next generation AFM Customer Service Portal (AFMCSP), which will represent a leap forward for our organization. Limited use testing will progress over the next few weeks. Test participants will receive a separate email with specific test schedules and instructions.

### **Post Doc Applications in ARIS**



Proposals for HQ funded ARS Research Associates for the class of 2015 need to be entered into ARIS by the **COB, July 7, 2014**.  
(proposals are limited to 4000 characters)

### ***Upcoming Training***



**Due June 30, 2014** - "Trouble shooting Tips when Launching Diversity on the Job: Diversity and You" (all Employees)  
**Due August 31, 2014** – "Hiring Reform for Hiring Managers" (all, supervisors, Managers, HR Personnel, Recruiters & Special Emphasis Program Managers).

### ***Stress Less: Learn to Manage Stress***



**using the following practices** (The international Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP), Martha McCarty, Jan-Feb, 2012):

How do you manage stress? Learning to manage stress will help you feel better. Below are a few best practices:

1. ***Focus on the Physical*** – Learn relaxation techniques. This could be as simple as

closing your eyes or taking a deep breath and letting it out slowly. Doing Yoga!

2. ***There's an App for that*** – Work overload is a big stressor, learn to utilize the technology around us. We can share our favorite time saving apps during one of our calls.
3. ***Feeling a little "Grumpy"*** – Stress can be contagious, irritating, or debilitating, learn how to soothe the mind and body. Picture something very relaxing and happy, such as walking on a beach or singing Happy Birthday to a loved one.
4. ***Intellectual*** – Recognize the thoughts you are having, and let them go, decide not to let them get your stressed.
5. ***Social*** – Learn to tap into wisdom and support of your admin support team. We are here for you!
6. ***Spiritual*** – Learn to find your "peaceful" place, and reach out to those in need.
7. ***When to chill out*** – Learn to relax during those long days.

### ***Best Practices and Lessons Learned:***

If you have any best practices or lessons learned that you would like to share, please contact a council member.

### ***An Inspirational Quote:***

Ability is what you are capable of doing.

Motivation determines what you do.

Attitude determines how well you do it."

(Quote by: Lou Holtz).